

# DISC Newsletter

## More on Effective Communication

By Joe Hennes

My assignment, to find ways to improve customer satisfaction through more effective communication, has caused me to seek out articles and books on the subject. Sometimes I'm amazed at how things work out. When I came to DISC in 1985, I brought along a box of books and binders from my previous job. That box has sat, basically unopened for all these years, in the corner of my office. The other day, out of pure curiosity, I opened the box to see what was in it. The first thing I pull out was a small book entitled, "The Communicator" by Royce Coffin. The descriptor on the cover reads, "The tactics, diplomacy, and sheer gall it takes to make it in the business and social world." My first thought was this material must be really dated and in many ways, it really is. For example, the author chooses to "use a style that uses as few words as possible, with illustrations to drive home the point." I was amazed at some of the illustrations. I suspect they would not pass muster in today's politically correct society. But I found that much of the material is still very relevant and thought it might be fun to share some of the concepts in this little book.

In his Acknowledgments, Royce tells his readers this book is based on real life experiences, literally from hundreds of contributors. Elsewhere he talks about this book being largely inspired by the mistakes he and his professional associates have made. These are the same mistakes people continue to make today, despite the high level of education prevalent in today's business world. How sad it is when well intentioned, hard working people fail to recognize and achieve the level of performance of which they are capable, simply because they cannot convey their thoughts.

I will not attempt to cover all the concepts presented in this cute little book. I will try to convey the messages from one particular section and that section deals with the fundamentals of good communication. As is the case with so many things in life, it's the fundamentals upon which everything else depends.

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The fundamentals the book describes are as follows:

- ◇ Don't be afraid to admit your weaknesses. All I could think of when I read this one was that old saying about it being better to appear foolish than to open your mouth and erase all doubt. You actually can gain favor with people by admitting you don't know it all. On the other hand, the book says, "don't berate yourself." Too much of an apologetic demeanor doesn't build confidence is your ability to do your job.
- ◇ Customize your approach. The same message isn't appropriate for all audiences. That is best applied in our case when you think about the approach you might use with a group of technicians versus that which you might use with a team of managers.
- ◇ Be patient. People do not all comprehend and process thoughts at the same rate. You have the benefit of knowing the idea or concept you are presenting, and while it may seem incredibly simple to you, it may not appear the same to someone else. Give them time to digest.
- ◇ Be considerate. If you are beginning a conversation that is going to take some time, make sure the other parties involved are comfortable. People need to not only be physically comfortable but also psychologically comfortable. This one reminds me of my first boss whose office was furnished with a huge desk and even bigger overstuffed chair, which he occupied. In front of that huge desk were several small stools in which visitor were invited to sit. Talk about uncomfortable. This arrangement very much conveyed the message that he was important and those in the stools were not.
- ◇ Don't be vague. I believe this is one of the most important. "Your equipment will be there soon." What exactly does soon mean? To one person that might mean a couple of days, while to another it could mean a couple of weeks. Be specific.
- ◇ Show appreciation when it's appropriate. Let people know they have done a good job by telling them thanks or paying them a compliment. This is particularly true when working in the team environment or dealing with subordinates. It's amazing how hard people will work when they know their efforts are appreciated.
- ◇ Get off to a good start. "A strong, warm, responsive beginning puts most communications in your control." I can't think of anytime when this is more important than at the start of a meeting. Make sure you have an agenda, that it's clear and achievable in the time allotted, and state your objective at the onset.
- ◇ Say what is on your mind. If you disagree with someone, say so. Beating around the bush serves no purpose other than to waste everyone's precious time. I think of this as "the games people play." You have all been there. Someone has an agenda of their own but rather than just stating it, they will spend an inordinate amount of time leading everyone to their particular desired result.
- ◇ Use a positive approach. When you approach someone with a statement like, "I don't suppose you'd want to help me with this project", you make it real easy for them to say no. Instead, use the route that calls for the answer you want.
- ◇ Know your subject and the facts. You lose your credibility quickly when you start speaking with authority about a subject about which you know very little. Do your research and don't quote facts and statistics unless you are sure they are correct. Often, the real truth comes out and in the future, those with whom you communicate will view your comments with suspicion.

This is just a taste of the treasure I found sitting in the corner of my office. It has several other sections that are equally interesting. I also received a very interesting little book from Vickie Rogers that deals with shaping communications. It talks about the need to be "an intentional communicator". Perhaps a future newsletter article will summarize some of the more interesting concepts in that book. But a common thread in both is that it takes effort to be a good communicator. It doesn't just happen and it's important for all of us to strive to be better communicators every day.



#### Helpful Tip:

Create folders to help organize your emails

# Employee Information

HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAYS TO:

Desi Gomez

Patty Copeland

Todd Pettit

Josh White

Dennis Sheets

Pam Rodecap

Kathy Kelley

Kelley Kuta

Tony Matalone

Helen Gibbon

## New Employee



Hank Sipple  
BOT  
February 27, 2006

## Births

Tom Kelly's Granddaughter  
**Pearson**  
February 28, 2006  
8 pounds, 3 ounces



## KUDOs

### BOT

To: Dan Glotzbach

Thank you very much for the information you provided to the KDHE Lab employees. That's exactly what they needed to hear and you were the perfect guy to deliver it to them. Your time and effort is greatly appreciated.

From: Captain Eric Pippin

To: Tony Appelhanz, Dan Glotzbach and Evan Desbien

Thanks for helping KSDE put on a successful Technology Fair at the Capitol. I appreciated the extra attention you gave us on the 16th.

From: Linda Grindol, Kansas Department of Education

Bill Berns Retired on February 24th to join the sailing ways at his marina. Anchors away Bill!



## Taylor Fund

There is a continuous contribution (change from your pocket) for Randy Taylor's children education fund. There is a can located in CSC next to the monitoring screens that you can put your spare change in. At the end of each month, Scott Wills and Mary Winans forward it on to the "Randy Taylor's Children Education Fund". If you have any questions, please contact Scott Wills or Mary Winans.



# Don't become the next victim to "Office Burnout"

By: Charlene Atwood

Office Burnout is considered the disease of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Burnout occurs from high stress and not enough time off. At some point in your career you will experience burnout. It's not a matter disliking your position, at some point you will just not feel like coming to work to face your boss, co-workers, or your desk.

The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines Burnout as, *exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration.*

Symptoms include: exhaustion, detachment from work, feeling of ineffectiveness, blowing up at fellow co-workers, high blood pressure, depression, fatigue, crying, loss of appetite or weight gain due to stress, teeth grinding, forgetfulness, low productivity, and headaches.

Dr. Shay Bintliff, clinical professor of Surgery and Pediatrics at the University Of Hawaii School Of Medicine, noted that some employees who are on the verge of burnout actually become workaholics. Some work more because it's the only thing they know how to do.

Here are a few reasons why employees get burned out?

- Layoffs-afraid of losing their jobs
- Not receiving the gratitude they deserve from their bosses
- Tired of their career, need a change
- Not getting along with co-workers and bosses
- Long hours
- Schedule workload, imbalance among other employees
- Lack of professional projects
- Office politics
- Over worked, too many projects
- New technology

Here are a few ways to overcome burnout:

- Leave work on time, don't work a lot of over-time
- Find exciting things to do outside the work-place
- Don't take work home with you, turn off your blackberry
- If your boss stresses you, sit down with him or her and see if there is some way you both can have a productive working relationship
- Prioritize your day-the world doesn't end if you don't get all your work done in one day, the same stacks will be there tomorrow.
- Laugh and talk with friends
- Go for a walk-sometimes just leaving your desk and getting fresh air helps
- Find a different job that best suites your goals and objectives
- Don't sweat the small stuff, learn to relax
- Most of all appreciate yourself



# “LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SERVICE”

**Session C:      March 27-29      8:00 AM – 11:30AM**  
**1:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

**CLASSES WILL BE HELD AT THE  
KU PUBLIC MANAGEMENT CENTER  
715 SW 10<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE, 4 BLOCKS FROM DISC**